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UNCLAS HANOI 000222

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FOR CA/OCS/ACS/EAP; EAP/EX; EAP/BCLTV
BANGKOK FOR RMO, CDC
STATE PASS HHS
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SUBJECT: VIETNAM - AVIAN FLU UPDATE #3

CURRENT STATUS

1. (U) There are currently 58 cases of suspected avian influenza in humans in Vietnam under investigation. Of these 10 have been confirmed as H5N1 in the laboratory. Of the 58 cases under investigation, 20 deaths have occurred. The WHO met with senior GVN officials on January 27th and made the following recommendations: stronger efforts must be made to remove the animal reservoir of the virus, human and agricultural surveillance must be improved, and protection of people at risk (those destroying diseased birds and medical workers) must be improved. The WHO further recommended that the Minister of Agriculture (MOA) personally chair the interagency working group that has been established within the GVN.

ADDRESSING PAST CONCERNS

2. (U) CULLING - PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE): THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL OFFICE (WPRO) OF WHO HAS REQUESTED ADDITIONAL PPE TO PROTECT POULTRY WORKERS BUT SO FAR NO DONOR COUNTRY HAS AGREED TO COVER THE COSTS OF THESE ORDERS. CONSEQUENTLY, THIS NEED REMAINS UNMET.

3. (U) Culling - Adequacy: The MOA is now taking more aggressive steps to improve culling efforts in Vietnam. According to MOA, 15,000 Vietnamese workers are currently involved in culling activities in 28 Vietnamese provinces. As of January 27th, 3.7 million poultry have died - 80% as a result of culling, 20% as a result of the disease.

4. (U) Human-to-human transmission: Active investigation to determine if human-to-human transmission continues. WHO and National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE) epidemiologists are now visiting cases and their families in rural areas. A study to investigate possible transmission to healthcare workers who care for H5N1 patients will begin this week.

5. (U) Laboratory services: NIHE laboratories are now working to test the backlog of specimens that developed over the Tet holidays. Two suspected cases (now deceased) have been confirmed as H5N1 infections.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

6. (U) Representatives from Vietnam's Ministries of Health and Agriculture are attending the ministerial-level regional cooperation meetings in Bangkok.
BURGHARDT